1: Grigson G-5, (1927-1934) 1949
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of logs covers nearly the whole of the room, except the dark corner where, as among the Hill Marias, rests the *Hanal Kunda* or Pot of the Departed. The various grains are stored in bamboo bins or in very large leaf-work *chiptis*. Other baskets contain dried mango pulp, fresh mangoes, mango kernels whole or crushed, the mousy smelling flowers of the *mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*), *mahua* seeds, and the fresh or dried fruits of the tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), *seona* (*Gmelina arborea*), *achar* (*Buchanania latifolia*), *tendu* (*Diospyros melanoxylon*), *siari* (elephant creeper, *Bauhinia vahlii*), the various dwarf palms, and other trees. They store far more forest produce than the Hill Marias, but less grain; their *penda* slopes are far less extensive, and, as copper coin circulates freely among them, they sell much more of their rice and garden produce. They do not use the various forest yams nearly as much as the Hill Marias.

The *narma-lon* is a sleeping room for the women and small children, and household goods and utensils are kept there. In the *oser* is the cooking hearth, the *ahki* mortar holes in which grain is husked with the large *musal* pestle, very similar in type to the Hill Maria *uspal*, hen's nests, water-pots, leaves for plates, etc. If any of the intoxicating *landa* gruel is under brew, it is kept usually in the cooler and darker *wijja-lon* or *narma-lon*. An interesting utensil seen in many Bison-horn houses is a spoon of brass, like an English pipe with a straight stem, and an exact reproduction in shape of the gourd ladles known in the hills as *paghas* and in the plains as *orka*, described on page 66 above. This is called a *kal-burria* or 'wine-ladle' and is used for distributing liquor. It is made by the Gharwa brass-workers by the *cire-perdue* process.

There are often side-sheds in which members of the family sleep, or where goats or kine are tethered at night, and poultry roost.

The other contents of their houses are similar to those of the Hill Maria houses, but they generally have more tools, weapons, hunting-nets, clothes and jewellery, owing to their growing habit of regular attendance at weekly bazaars and their greater readiness to sell their produce.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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241 [417] the midst of the grain crops to support them. The cut crops which are to be threshed are stacked on the wooden platforms prepared before sowing, in beehive shaped stacks, called *paki* by the Hill Marias and *kupa* in Halbi.

The women prepare the threshing-floor (*karanu* in the hill dialect), clearing a piece of ground near the stacks of grain, and plastering it with mud. In the centre of this the men erect a thick [784] bamboo railing on posts. It is *polo* for women to take part in the actual threshing. Oxen are never used. For each cultivator in [476] turn, beginning with the *kasyeq-gaita*, all the men and boys in the village combine to thresh (*wisna*). They range themselves in two rows facing each other, with the bamboo railing between them.[1] Holding this with both their hands and supporting themselves by it, they dance up and down, rubbing the ears of corn between their feet. They thresh in this way only *kodon*, *kutki*, rice, *ghatka*, *chikma* and *hikka*; the women pick the ears of grains like *kang* and *bajra* in baskets, and rub them in their hands to extract the grain. The cultivator whose grain is being threshed is expected to feed all the villagers helping him for that day, and if possible to give them ● [273] a good drink of *salphi*, the fermented sap of the sago palm (*Caryota urens*; Maria, *garga marra*), which is raised from cuttings in large numbers all over the Hill Maria country. The threshed grain is winnowed by men only, winnowing being as taboo to women as sleeping in the fields or threshing. One man stands on a rough wooden platform and pours the grain from a basket held above his head, while another, if there is not wind enough, winnows the falling grain with a basketry winnowing fan of the usual Indian type (*het* in Maria). All the men and women of the village combine to carry the threshed and winnowed grain of each cultivator to his compartment in the long granary. They never measure their produce, but there is no taboo on this account; it simply is that they grow crops for their own sustenance, and not for sale, and it is easy to see whether the grain garnered is adequate for the coming year or 804 not. They do indeed understand something of bazaar measures, for some of their pulses and oil seeds are sold annually to raise the money needed to pay their poll-tax; they make their own measures of basketry, with different traditional shapes for each kind of produce that they sell; and at the bazaar you may see them measuring out their produce in these in front of the Hindu tradesmen to whom they are selling it. Their measures are very accurate, and need never be challenged. If they make them a little too large, they plaster a little mud over the bottom to reduce the capacity.

[1] I have since seen *kodon* and *kutki* threshed in the same way by Korkus on the Betul border of Hoshangabad District, Central Provinces.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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falls dead on its back with its claws in the air, it is an excellent omen. When making his offerings, the *kasyeq-gaita* adjures the Mother to remain favourable to the village.

All return then to the clan-god, and here the clan-priest offers for each village some of the new grain and cuts the throat of the cocks and pigs brought by each *kasyeq-gaita*, sprinkling blood from each victim on the clan-god, on whom he calls to be ever present to help them, in weal or woe, in field or forest, at home or abroad. In the less important new-eatings, if the practice among the Bardal clan observed in August 1930 at Kutul is universal, the flesh of the sacrificed animals is not then eaten in a communal feast, but divided among the men present, each of whom takes it to his home, where the male members of the family alone eat it with new grain. Some liquor is drunk in the houses by the men and the unmarried girls, but this is not an essential part of the proceedings. The fermented rice gruel, *landa*, which is always freely consumed at Bison-horn Maria *pandums*, is never even manufactured by Hill Marias, who say that it is taboo to them. After the return of each village delegation to its village, the local *kasyeq-gaita* (whether there is a *bhum-gaita* or not) performs a similar ceremony on a smaller scale before his Village Mother; this in some clan-areas is attended by the clan-priest also, as a guest, but not as a celebrant except in a few large villages to which the clan-god is brought for the occasion; in some other villages a cairn or table-stone is set up near the Village Mother's shrine, and, like her shrine, sprinkled with blood. Nor are the Departed forgotten, for they, too, can harm the garnered crops or the next harvest. The housewife pounds the new grain before the festival in a specially made mortar hole with a pestle (*uspal*) washed in water newly drawn from a running stream. She cooks it in the *lonu* room on the Hearth of the Departed (see p. 114 above), and the ashes of this fire are never swept away. In the evening, before the new food is eaten, she places a little as an offering on the floor just in front of the Pot of the Departed, with some appropriate adjuration; and some she places in three *siari* leaves, which in the early morning her husband deposits outside the village by the side of some path (never, apparently, at the cemetery or the Stones of the Dead (*kotokal*)), saying, '*Kopa-kopi muneta tado-pepi hisor mator, ade hintoram*,' meaning, 'We give what our grandfathers and great-grandfathers used to give to their ancestors of old.'

The association of the clan-god with the three first new-eatings is not so marked as at the last, which is the harvest-home celebration. The tendency is to regard them more as domestic than even village ceremonies. No dancing or drumming is allowed at them, and no

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241 In his *mudur erka* (big tree *erka*) he raises *chikma* (*Panicum miliare*), *gatka* (*Panicum frumentaceum*) and *sama*, all crops of the first sowing, ripening by early August, and, as main crops, *mandia* (*Eleusine coracana*) which he calls *gurra*, and *kulthi*, which he, like the Hill Maria, calls *kohala*, both of which ripen with the *penda kulthi* in early December; with him *Eleusine coracana* is an important [273] crop, as he uses it as a principal ingredient in his *landa* intoxicant. In his *marram erka* (brushwood *erka*) he sows only the pulses *urad* (*Phaseolus radiatus*), which he calls *popul*, and *kulthi* (*Glycine hispida* and *Dolichos biflorus*) which he calls *koreng*. The '*os kosra*' millets which the Hill Maria sows as a second crop after the crops reaped in August he calls '*mach kohala*', and sows not only similarly as a second crop, but also as the main crop in his *erka* land for the third and last year of its cultivation, when it is too exhausted to bear anything else.

241 423 Besides the fact observed on page 128 above that, unlike the Hill Maria, he ploughs the ashes, or digs them with his hoe, into his *erka* and *penda* lands, these lands have, therefore, this further great difference from the Hill Maria *penda* lands, that each crop has its own appropriate type of cultivation, and is therefore sown separately, not jumbled up with every other kind of crop in a hopeless welter. He is, moreover, careful to preserve any mango or other fruit trees on his plot. As he retains permanent rights over his plot, whether it is tilth or forest at the moment, he has to be more careful over its boundaries than the Hill Maria, and cannot be content with the temporary sowing of a line of *til* or roselle. At each burning, therefore, he spares important trees or stumps at boundary junctions, which he calls *sarkari* or '*authority*' trees, and sometimes he leaves a thin line of trees standing along his boundary when he fells the forest. He generally grows his beans and gourds on these and other trees, not on poles stuck up in the middle of other crops like the Hill Maria.

241 [417] [231] It has been seen that he has always a *bari* garden enclosure round or near his house in the village, which he calls *lon-welung* or '*house fencing*', and generally fences with either bamboo wattlework (*wedur-welung*) or a fence of brushwood tied slantwise between horizontal struts (*jhat-welung*). Here at night he pens his cattle, and the ground is thus richly manured to bear maize (*jonna*), *sarson* or mustard (*tarson*) and tobacco (*pogo*)[1] as essential crops, with, in these days frequent patches of chillies, tomatoes and other vegetables. *Sarson* is the most paying crop exported from Bastar.

[1] The Hill Maria grows tobacco and a few poor chillies and tomatoes in little plots left clear of dab grasses when *penda* land is useless for grain.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Chapter VIII

Procuring of Other Food and Drink

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'Whatever came across them they must needs kill and eat it;
They made no distinction. If they saw a jackal they killed
And ate it; no distinction was observed; they respected not antelope,
sambhar and the like.
They made no distinction in eating a sow, a quail, a pigeon,
A crow, a kite, an adjutant, a vulture,
A lizard, a frog, a beetle, a cow, a calf, a he- and a she-buffalo,
Rats, bandicoots, squirrels—all these they killed and ate.
So began the Gonds to do. They devoured raw and ripe things.'
(Hislop's version of the Lingo epic of the Gonds.)

A. Food Gathering

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Famine has never been a problem in Bastar, as the Marias and other tribes have always been able to draw half of their food supplies from the innumerable edible products of the vast forests. The difficulty is not so much to say what they collect and eat as what they do not; in fact, if one were to take one of the lists of trees, shrubs and herbs compiled by the Central Provinces Forest Department, and copy from it the names of all edible forest products, one would not even then produce an exhaustive list. At page 124 above, many of the more important forest products collected and garnered were enumerated. *Mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) is not common in the Abujhmar hills, where consequently little *mahua* spirit is distilled or drunk; where it does occur, the Hill Marias collect its flowers and fruit as eagerly as cultivators throughout India. It is common in the Bison-horn country. The women and children gather the fallen flowers in the mornings. It is dried in the sun, and then stored in bamboo wicker baskets; it keeps a long time. It is used to flavour *pej* and *gato*, or roasted. Oil is pressed in the plains from the fruit. Tamarind trees are not really wild, but were originally planted around village sites; the fruit is carefully gathered from all the unoccupied village sites. The fruits of the *achar* (*Buchanania latifolia*) and *tendu* (*Diospyros melanoxylon*) are two of the main sources of food supply. They collect also fruit of the *seona* (*Gmelina arborea*), *jamun* (*Eugenia jambolana*) and *aonla* (*Phyllanthus emblica*). Wild mangoes are common, and they are learning to cultivate the tree; they store whole fruit, dried pulp, and kernels whole or crushed. In the south of the State the toddy palm (*Borassus flabellifer*) is the mainstay of the economic life of the people, but

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226 the water. On each side of each torch-bearer goes a man armed with bow and arrows; for small fish the arrows have heads like the handles of spoons, but for large fish they use arrows with heads with only one wing and barb, like an ordinary arrow-head bisected from point to shank. The torch-bearers and bowmen wade up against the current, and the fish, which at night are feeding in these shallows and not in the deep pools, are attracted or stupefied by the glare and are easily shot with the arrows or caught in the baskets.'

E. Intoxicants and Other Drinks

273 The commonest intoxicant in the Abujhmar hills is the fermented juice of the sago-palm (*Caryota urens*), and the tree is common also in many parts of the Bison-horn Maria country. It is now propagated freely by Hill and Bison-horn Marias. The tree, unlike the toddy-palm, is monoecious. The flowering peduncles, which appear like thin elephant trunks, have their ends cut off before they flower, and act as taps, bamboo tubes being fastened below the cut to catch the sap; the Bison-horn Marias often use earthenware pots. The tubes are emptied in the morning and evening, bamboo poles still retaining the stumps of side-shoots being tied on to the trees as rough ladders. When [272] fresh, the sap is not intoxicating and has a pleasant dry taste, not unlike champagne. After two or three years' tapping the tree dies, when the inner tissue of the stem yields the starchy food substance 757 already mentioned. If the ends of the peduncle get worm- or grub-eaten before they are tapped, it is considered a sure sign of witchcraft, and more than one murder has been recorded on this 534 account. The bottom of the trunk of the dead tree is commonly used as the hollow body of the Hill Maria single-membrane *turam* or kettle-drums.

Sago-palm

273 The toddy-palm (*Borassus flabellifer*) is not grown or tapped in the Abujhmar hills, but is common in the south of the Bison-horn country especially among the so-called Koyas and the Dorlas, and in Sukma and Konta. In this teluguized region whole villages camp out in the toddy groves from March till June in a perpetual state of semi-intoxication, taking solid food only in the evening, and sometimes going without that for three or four days or even a week. The sap is tapped by cutting the ends of the flowering spadices, in much the same way as the sago-palm; the spadix appears in the male trees from November to March, while the female tree yields sap from April to June. The vessels used to catch the sap are generally thick bamboo tubes three or four feet long, of about three gallons capacity. Excessive tapping soon shortens the life of the trees. The juice rapidly ferments, though not intoxicating when drawn, and fermentation is expedited by the habit of mixing the fresh juice with that left

Toddy-palm

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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over from previous days. The female trees bear fruit in May, and the pulp of this is eaten, generally after roasting the fruit on an earthenware crock and breaking off the rind. They also eat the unripe seeds and seedlings, as well as the roots. They collect the seed and leave it to germinate in pits; they propagate the trees also from root cuttings. 273

Individual ownership in the trees is to some extent recognized, not necessarily, however, in the owner of the land. There is a sort of village arrangement as to the trees to be tapped by each family, permitting a rough rotation where trees are plentiful, so as to give them a much needed rest from tapping. The Koyas and Dorlas sacrifice a fowl or a goat at the foot of the first tree tapped, and the sacrificial victims are then taken to the Village Mother's shrine and eaten there by the men. 273 423

Date-palm The *sindi* (*Phoenix sylvestris*) is occasionally tapped in the Bison-horn country by making an incision in the bark below the crown of the tree. 273

Mahua The *mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) is common everywhere except in the Abujhmar hills, and it is the spirit distilled from it that is sold at the State excise shops, except for a few toddy shops around Konta. There is very little illicit distillation, the State liquor distilled by licensees at outstills being very cheap, and the pass rules enabling Marias fairly easily to get an adequate supply of the spirit for the religious and domestic or social occasions at which its consumption is obligatory. The State does not tax the tapping of the sago-palm and toddy-palm, but merely tries to prohibit the sale and to limit the quantity of the resulting spirit which individuals may possess. [656] [651]

The Parjas and Bison-horn Marias sometimes make a wine from *mahua*, said to be red in colour, by several successive boilings and strainings of *mahua* flowers. It is called *suram*; I have never been able to get hold of any.

Landa *Landa*, a cause of half the homicide committed in Bastar, is the favourite intoxicant of the Bison-horn Marias, but is taboo to the Hill Maria. It is made of equal portions of husked rice or *kuthi* and *mandia* (*Eleusine coracana*). The rice or *kuthi* is soaked well in water, strained off and pounded to a paste. The *mandia* grain is first damped and allowed to sprout, then dried in the sun for three or four days, and soaked, strained and pounded like the rice or *kuthi*. Both are then well mixed. They then take an earthenware *handi*, with holes in the bottom, and cover the holes with a lattice of bamboo slices, on which they place *siari* leaves. The mixed rice or *kuthi* and sprouted *mandia* are piled on these leaves. The *handi* is then placed on a *handi* of

[see cat. 116 | p. 421. – Rural 75]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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273 water, and the latter on the fire, so that the contents of the upper *handi* may be well steamed. When they have been steamed long enough, they are mixed in another *handi* with water to the consistency of *pej* gruel, and left in a cool place to ferment for five or six days, with the top lidded with leaves; when there is a smell like a fowl-house that badly needs cleaning they know that it is ready. *Landa* has to be provided in large quantities for all the guests at a wedding, when open house is kept; all present at funeral ceremonies need it, and some is poured over the menhir erected in the name of the dead man at the *Urashal*; it is given to all who have worked on a new tank at the completion ceremony; a *handi* full is carried by a lad's father and party when going to ask a man for his daughter as wife for the lad; on the sixth day after a child is born *landa* is given to the man and woman called from each house for the naming; at sowing, reaping, threshing and ploughing a little is given to every helper; and at each *pandum* each household makes and consumes some. At the Kuram Pandum, when the new *kuthi* is eaten, the *landa* should be made from new *kuthi*.

273 271 **Other drinks**

There is said to be some creeper from the flowers or sap of which an intoxicating liquor is made by the Bison-horn Marias in the Sukma zamindari, below the Tulsidongri mountains; of this no proof was forthcoming. Possibly the rumour referred to the known habit of the Marias drinking the sap of the wild vine *Vitis repanda* as a substitute for water. Otherwise water is their sole other drink, always from clear running streams, save in the dry southern fringes of the Bison-horn country in Konta tahsil.

271 **Drinking**

The Hill Maria and the Bison-horn drink after meals. The latter drinks in the normal Indian way, and often from a brass *lota*, or at least a leaf-cup. The former, however, in the remoter villages still almost steals to the edge of the stream like a shy animal, kneels down, and puts his mouth to the water. Otherwise he stands in the water and scoops up water into his mouth with rapid moves of alternate hands.

273 [169]

When Bison-horn Marias drink *mahua* spirit, either the head of the family, in case of domestic ceremonies, or every drinker in general drinking bouts, before drinking pours a drop or two on the ground in the name of the Departed. Hill Marias follow the same practice in general drinking bouts, but the libation may be made before or after drinking. The liquor is brought in large earthen pots or in gourd bottles from the nearest liquor-shop. Hill Marias fill large leaf-cups from it, which they take round to all present and from them fill the small leaf-cups which each person has ready for himself; the Bison-horn Maria doles out his liquor either with the

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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orka gourd ladle mentioned on page 66 above, or, in these days of sophistication, with a more or less exact imitation, known as a *hal-burria* or wine-ladle, made in bronze by the *cire perdue* process by the Gharwas, about the size of a large meerschaum pipe, with a hollow stem holed on the top of what would be the mouthpiece if it were a pipe; the 'bowl' is filled with liquor, which is poured out into the drinker's leaf-cup through this hole. Men, young women and girls, and boys drink; and mothers give liquor to their children except those only just born. Girls soon know when they have had enough, but even then never let the wine-bearer pass them without refilling their leaf-cup, which as soon as he has passed by they take over to the youth of their fancy.

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1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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535 dance, which makes everyone laugh, while all the mediums of neighbouring villages attend, and, possessed by their godlings, leap wildly to and fro, carrying bunches of *soja* leaves in their hands or holding them over their matted hair, to the general merriment. The chief wedding dance is the bison dance, every male turning at intervals in his paces to smile and 'glad-eye' the next dancer, and each then pretending to butt the other with his bison-horns; in another figure they similarly mimic two cocks fighting. The greatest sign of skill is to be able to impale on the tip of the horns a piece of grass twisted into a ring and thrown on the ground; the dancer may before this pretend to be a young and frisky bull, butting at wisps of grass or trees, or hurling them into the air to toss them on his horns. I have seen a dancer pick a small finger ring off the ground on the tip of his horns. As among the Hill 535 Marias, and indeed most Central Provinces Gonds, there is always 831 a comic and obscene element; men wearing black gourd masks with thick hair and beards of black bear or goat fur, and carrying clubs, nets and dummy guns, rush in and out amongst the dancers, making obscenely suggestive gestures with their clubs at the dancing or onlooking girls, and provoking roars of laughter.

[273] There is generally a pause for *landa* or *mahua* spirit sooner or later, after which the girls sometimes, before resuming the dance, sit in a bunch swaying from their hips and singing short catchy refrains, with either frankly sexual meaning or no meaning at all; and often the lads opposite make the whole company laugh by imitating them in falsetto.

The dancing and singing, it need hardly be said, lead on frequently to love-making, couples retiring into the darkness, or else starting an affair ending in experimental union and perhaps, later, in matrimony.

E. Other Amusements

524 The Bison-horn Marias' favourite pastime of cock-fighting has already been described (see page 162 above). Small wooden toys are made for the children, very crude representations of tigers or [164] other animals; and a pathetic sight at the graves of children are these toys left there for the *hawal*[1] of the children to play with. I have never found any Marias making string figures; and they have 526 shown no interest in attempts to demonstrate them. The Murias and Bhattras have innumerable games in which all the village youth takes part in the cold weather and spring nights, many of which

[1] Literally the "Gone" used of the spirits of the dead.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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796 other villages. Though this is called the 'remains-eating' feast, yet actually fresh meat is killed and cooked, because women and [784] girls, who are not allowed to attend the sacrifices, are equally debarred from eating any part of the sacrificial victims. The day ends in *landa* drinking and dancing. In these first-fruits *pandum* [535] dances the bison-horn head-dresses used not to be worn, and in the dance following the *pandum* for new *mahua* and new mangoes men and women dancers dance together, and not separately as in all other Bison-horn Maria dances.

We come now to the great vernal sowing festival with its attendant dancing and hunting that takes place on or near the full moon day of Chait (March-April), and corresponds to the Chait-rai festival of the Bhattras, Parjas and Murias. It starts on a Sunday, five or six days after the *Marka Pandum*. *Landa* is brewed in profusion [273] in every house for days in advance, and as much *mahua* liquor procured from the excise shops as household funds and the excise [834] rules permit. Sexual continence is, as in all these ceremonies, the rule for the night before the festival begins, and in some villages is ensured by all the men sleeping together that night and until the last ceremony is over, generally in the *kadri-bera* field or at the place from which the ritual *weta* hunt sets off.

The Wijja Pandum, Wijja Weta and Jur Weta

The *perma* fasts next morning, and after the men of the village have had their morning meal goes at about noon to the *mahua* tree in the *kadri-bera* or *wijj-erhu* (see pp. 205-6) field, with a supply of rice and an egg, and the men accompany him. He cuts a small bough off the tree, to which in some villages he first sacrifices a black cock. He clears and plasters with cow-dung and water the usual small rectangle of ground, and in the centre makes a hole in which he plants the *mahua* bough and a plant of *dab* (*Pollinia argentea*) grass. In front of this he sprinkles rice and egg-shells, in which he sets an egg upright on its end in the name of the Village [515] Mother, or of Bhu-deo and Bhu-devi. He then takes up a *datun* or tooth-cleaning twig of *mahua*, splits it longitudinally in his teeth, [787] and throws the split pieces three times on the ground. For the pieces to fall one on the other like a saltire each time is the best of omens for the coming hunt and the ensuing harvest; for them to fall apart is a bad omen. Sometimes this consultation of the omens 796 does not take place in the *kadri-bera* field, but in the forest at the 798 place from which the ritual hunt is to start; there sometimes a rough altar of bows and arrows, as in the illustration opposite, is made, and the *perma*, facing the east, places on the ground before the altar three heaps of mixed bran and egg-shells in the name of each of the three Ban Kunwarin or Forest-maidens, and on each

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241 735 economic disaster caused by the arbitrary stopping of their *dahi*, *podu* or *jalapod* cultivation. They said that they did not need this for profit, but to save their lives. They urged that if *jalapod* were allowed in a reasonable manner they would always be able to produce enough corn even in years of deficient or irregular rainfall. The men said that in the former days of *jalapod* cultivation they usually cultivated a plot for two years and then left it for five or six years, within which short period *palas*[1] and other forest growth grew high enough for them to cut and burn again."[2]

177 291 Mirkal, Pirmeli and surrounding villages are within the orbit of Allapilli and Ahiri, and the average Maria was clearly exposed to Hindu culture contact, of which the outward sign was the wearing of coats and shorts purchased from Ahiri market or from itinerant Mahar pedlars.

342 The *District Gazetteer* records that the Maria house in the remoter parts of the zamindaris is occasionally very substantial, with walls formed of barked logs laid horizontally and kept in position by upright posts, the interstices being daubed with mud and the whole being thatched with jungle grass.[3] There still are many substantial huts in the villages between Allapilli and Lahiri, but I formed the impression that the standard of housing had deteriorated, possibly because of stricter regulation of felling of trees for domestic purposes.

273 656 [405] On the twenty-three miles drive from Pirmeli to Bhamragarh we passed several villages rich in toddy palms, and often saw Marias climbing the tree trunks by rough 'ladders' lashed to the trunks consisting of bamboo stems with the stumps of their side-shoots cut short to act as rungs. The climbers carry, slung round their waist and hanging down like tails, thick bamboo tubes to catch the tapped juice, as described on page 168, sometimes also they take up big gourd bottles. The Provincial Government has for a long time pursued a wiser excise policy in South Chanda than in other tribal areas, of allowing Marias free tree-tapping licences for domestic consumption in certain scheduled villages. The licences are valid for three years and the number of trees that may be tapped is restricted according to the population of the village and the number of trees available for tapping. This applies in much of the Maria country to the *caryotis urens* or sago-palm, the juice of which, as in Bastar, is much preferred to that of the ordinary toddy palm. This privilege had been accorded only to 239 villages of Sironcha tahsil and 58 of Garchiroli tahsil. The selection of villages had been somewhat eclectic; some large villages with only a small Maria or

[1] *Butea frondosa.*
[2] *The Aboriginal Problem*, p. 185.
[3] *Chanda District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1909), p. 202

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

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Gond element had been scheduled, and many others omitted. It was unsound also to confine the privilege to Marias and Gonds, for there are many other aboriginal or semi-aboriginal tribes, such as Pardhan, Halba, Nagarchi, Thoti and Ojha, and artisan, grazier and untouchable castes living in close symbiosis with the Marias, who should get this concession; such an extension would reduce cases of illegal tapping, possession, sale and transfer, and minimise excise subordinate officials' opportunities for harassment and extortion. One of the worst agents of exploitation in aboriginal areas has been the Kalar excise contractor. The Maria here, thanks to this toddy and sago-palm concession, and the availability therefore in his village of this free source of mild intoxicant and the yeast vitamin, has long been far freer of economic thraldom to the Kalar than the other aboriginals in the province who have not had this concession. Moreover the Maria does not seriously abuse this privilege, except perhaps by occasionally selling or giving toddy to non-Marias. I strongly opposed a Nagpur proposal that 'a beginning should be made in the direction of regulating the drinking of toddy by the Marias of Sironcha' who, it was said, 'literally subsist on toddy for some months of the year and are drunk most of the time'. There may be some truth in this theory of drunkenness in regard to the teluguized plains, villages of Sironcha outside the zamindari, as noted of similar South Bastar villages on page 168. But of the Ahiri Marias it is quite false. For one thing the morning and evening climb of the palm-trees by rough bamboo ladders calls for nerve, and would be impossible for a drunkard. All through this tour I never saw a Maria drunk on toddy. Nor in the average Maria village are there enough tappable trees available to cause a tenth of this alleged general intoxication.

Just near Bhamragarh in one village bitter weeping came from a woman whose husband had been hauled off that morning for illicit tapping of toddy in an excise raid. As usual the main lament was not so much against this being treated—to my mind needlessly—as an offence, as against the social consequences of being handcuffed and imprisoned. Here we were close to the Kasansogh Togh or Kasansur Turri and other islands of the Indrawati formerly the subject of a boundary dispute between Chanda and Bastar, which I had settled in my voyage down the Indrawati from Kutru in 1927; across the river lay Pharasnar, headquarters of a sub-zamindari of Kutru zamindari, where I had then camped. The ethnographic map on page 40 marks the population of the Bastar bank here as mixed Dorla and Hill Maria, or Hill Maria who have almost become Dorla; and on page 52 I have noted that though on both sides of the river the villagers seem to be of Hill Maria origin and still exchange

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2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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times be of very great length. In Kuntpadar there were two measuring over 21 feet long. 226 227

The *dhir* is an elaborate and beautifully constructed trap, from four to eight feet long and one and a half feet high. The bamboo slats are very fine and set close together. Entrance to the trap is by a series of small doors with spiral staircases going inwards and upwards with bamboo points facing in to prevent egress. When the fish have entered—and the *dhir* is only used for the smallest creatures—they are shaken out of a small hole at the top left-hand corner. In a riddle this trap is described, '*Natânsh horinta murwus tagat ke peshinta*: It goes in behind and comes out through the roof', or 'It eats with four mouths and relieves through the fifth'. [524]

A special arrow with a detachable head is sometimes used (Fig. 12). The arrow-head after sticking in the fish is pulled out of its socket but remains attached to the shaft by a cord. The shaft remains as a float, and is easily recovered.

Ceremonial beats for fish are held before the eating of the new mangoes. The chelik gather poisonous leaves and roots from the forest and throw them into the water. The fish are stupefied and float to the surface and are then easily collected. They are distributed among the villagers, who eat them with the new mangoes. 226 278

Many different roots and leaves are used as fish-poison. At Phunder they gave us the names of the fruit of the mode tree, the khuni plant and kurra bark. These three are powdered, mixed together and thrown into the water. Women are not supposed to go into the water when this is done.

Before fishing the Muria invoke the Yer Kanyang (Water Maiden), asking for success and promising a token present. When the first fish is caught they say, 'Whatever ill may be, from widow, witch, from squint or evil eye, be on you'. They spit on it and throw it back into the water. If there is a very successful catch, they may sacrifice a goat or pig on the bank of the river in honour of the Water Maiden. 226 776 782

XI. Liquor

To the Muria liquor-drinking is both a duty and a pleasure. Mahua spirit is a duty because it must be offered to the gods at every festival, at the naming of a child, at a marriage, at a funeral. But the juice of the sago-palm, and even landa rice-beer (where that is taken), is only for pleasure. I will consider duty first. 273●

The mahua tree is a source of food and oil as well as of liquor, and for this reason is greatly honoured. The tree, says Dalton, 'is held sacred by the Gonds, and truly no product of nature has greater claims on their gratitude'.[1] The Muria place a branch of the tree in the centre of the marriage booth; they lay the dead to rest beneath its shade; it is taboo to cut it in a clearing for shifting cultivation; as a source of alcoholic refreshment it was discovered by Lingo himself. Like the Gond and Baiga, the Muria are bound to offer it on every ceremonial occasion; the clan-god demands it, the Village Mother can never have enough, there is no better means of keeping the Departed content and quiet.[2] 273 824

In the ghotul, a donation of mahua spirit must be brought by a young boy aspiring to chelikhood; its consumption is a necessary feature of an election 273 883

[1] E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 281.
[2] The Koya put a mahua leaf in the hand of a new-born child.—Thurston, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 52.

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of ghotul leaders; it is distributed when a boy or girl leaves the ghotul after marriage; it is a convenient and compendious means of paying a fine. The chelik offer it to their drums before a wedding, and drink it in honour of Lingo at the end of the Pus Kolang dance.

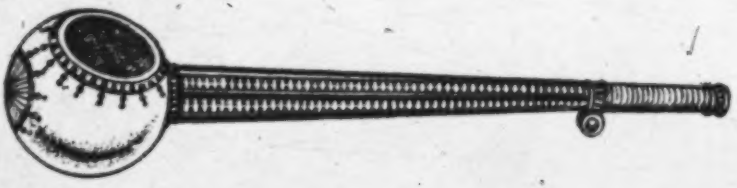

FIG. 13. Brass *orki* used for ladling liquor
Length 8"-9"

This homely drink, so intimately connected with every aspect of their lives, so accessible to the forest-dwellers, so readily and cheaply prepared, may not be distilled by the Muria in Bastar or by the aboriginals anywhere. Its profits must be divided between the State and the middleman. Home-distillation is everywhere forbidden, and the privilege of the manufacture and sale of the spirit is farmed out to contractors in open auction. The business has thus passed into the hands of the most degenerate type of Hindu and Mussalman adventurer, for few aboriginals have either the means or the enterprise to compete with the sophisticated aggression of the outside world in the open market. These adventurers rob both the aboriginals and the State. They dilute the spirit; they put soda in it to cover the fact of their tampering; they make false returns; they use filthy water in unclean pots;[1] their shops are centres of the most degraded type of alien immigrant into tribal territory.

When the National Congress came into power in 1938, they declared that they would not apply their Prohibition laws to Europeans or aboriginals. It would have been more consistent had they allowed the aboriginal to distil his own liquor and had thus ceased to draw revenue from his drinking habits. The real evil of the present system is not that the aboriginal gets drunk, but that in order to get his liquor he is forced into contact with the worst type of alien and outsider.

In this respect conditions in Bastar are better than in many other parts of India. The Excise Department is efficient and understanding; the State controls the mahua trade, but allows the aboriginal great freedom in the use of toddy and salphi. But nothing can atone for the evil of depriving a primitive people of a natural right.

However, once that has been done, the arrangements in Bastar are as good as can be imagined. The spirit is cheap, only two annas a bottle,[2] and passes are freely granted to the Muria and Maria to purchase whatever is needed for ceremonial and social occasions. As a result there appears to be very little illicit distillation in either Kondagaon or Narayanpur. The figures of prosecutions for the five years, 1937–41, are these:

[1] The riddle 'Man and wife piss in the same lane', to which the answer is 'The two pipes of the still', probably hints at the dirt of the Kalar's out-still.
[2] This was in 1941.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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Tahsil	Population in 1941	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	Total
Kondagaon ..	111,428	3	1	1	..	6	11
Narayanpur ..	62,305	13	..	2	..	3	18
Jagdalpur ..	236,931	16	4	14	5	26	65
Dantewara ..	90,345	58	20	35	10	20	143
Bijapur ..	25,587	4	17	29	18	23	91

Such a table does not, of course, mean quite what it says. An increase in the number of cases detected may imply greater zeal on the part of the Excise and Police staff rather than an outbreak of illicit distillation. Moreover, as the Excise Officer writes to me, 'The number of cases detected represents only a small fraction of those actually occurring, especially in the south of the State'.

Yet even so, the contrast between the Muria of the north and the more civilized Muria of Jagdalpur and the Bison-horn Maria of Dantewara and Bijapur is striking. In the ghotul, the peace-loving Muria are taught to observe the laws.

On the other hand, the incidence of the consumption of mahua spirit in 1942 was greater in the Narayanpur Tahsil than anywhere in Bastar. There is only one way of calculating this, and that is on the basis of the licence fees, which are in turn based on the presumed out-turn of the still; such figures cannot be altogether reliable, but they give at least some indication, as the following table will show: 273

Tahsil	Population in 1941	Presumed out-turn in gallons	Consumption per 100 of the population in proof gallons
Kondagaon ..	111,428	36,137	32·43
Narayanpur ..	62,305	36,700	58·90
Jagdalpur ..	236,931	63,581	26·84
Dantewara ..	90,345	42,000	46·48
Bijapur ..	25,587	11,275	44·06
Sukma Zamindari	47,914	24,200	50·51

The Muria recognize the danger of drinking to excess, and indeed they have few drunkards. 'Liquor is dangerous, even a wise woman falls through drinking.' 'An out-still in the village—quarrels in the ghotul.' But it is irresistible. 'At first it tastes nasty, but afterwards you know it for the sweetest thing on earth. You would sell everything to get it.' There is a song about drunkenness:

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Gond bond bhaisa pond
Lei kadri katin pond,
Kalär kalärin chuniya chor,
Ghar ghar mangai burga jor.

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273 This seems to mean, 'When drunk a Gond is like the hind-quarters of a buffalo, which you can cut with a knife but nothing happens. The Kalar and his 539 wife are the thieves of the liquor-pots and so they have to beg from door to door for beef-soup.' The song reveals the usual scorn for and unpopularity of the Kalar.

276 The Muria do not approve of drugs. 'We will seduce the Kalar's daughter (mahua spirit), but we won't even look at the Raja's sister (opium).' They do not drink *gānja* or *bhāng*—'those are for the Hindus'—though Lingo is said to have distributed *gānja* to chelik and motiari in the ghotul he founded. Kotla, an old Muria of Kuntpadar, recalled what happened to him when he drank *gānja* as a chelik. 'Once as I was ploughing my field, I took off my cloth and put it under a tree, where a cow found and ate it. In the evening I felt cold and took a lot of *gānja* to warm myself. I got very drunk and shouted in the ghotul that I was going to die. That night I took several motiari and they were all angry with me. Next morning I felt very ashamed and have never taken *gānja* or even tobacco since.'

272 The Muria sometimes make what is called *surem*, a concoction of mahua flowers which have been boiled in water again and again, sometimes with slices of mango added. They occasionally tap the date palm and drink its sweet heavy juice. In the east and south of the ghotul country, they 273 occasionally make the landa rice-beer so beloved of the Bison-horn Maria.

Landa, which tastes like an imaginary mixture of dynamite and Sanatogen, is the most potent intoxicant in Bastar. It is also the most deceptive. It does not produce its effect at once. The thick tasty fluid slips down the throat, and the drinker deceives himself into thinking he is having a good meal; before he knows what has happened he is dangerously drunk, and he remains drunk for a long time. Not a few of the homicidal crimes of the Bison-horn Maria are due to or are at least occasioned by the drinking of landa.[1]

To the Hill Maria, landa is *polo*, or taboo, and the Jhoria and northern Muria under Maria influence do not make it. Its use appears to be confined to the Muria of the centre, east and south. It is made by mixing kosra or rice and mandia. The rice or kosra is first soaked in water, then dried and ground in an ordinary hand-mill. The resulting flour is mixed with hot water into a paste. A woman places a large earthenware pot full of boiling water on the fire and fixes an inverted conical basket (called the *jib*) over its mouth. She fills this with the paste and steams it for about a quarter of an hour and then puts it aside.

Previously the mandia grain has been soaked in water, set aside for two or three days till it has sprouted and then dried and ground. The woman pours some of it into a very large pot, puts the rice paste above it, and adds more mandia flour in the proportion of one part of mandia to two of rice or kosra. She then fills the pot up with cold water and puts it aside in a corner of the room. Here it stands for five or six days; when it is seen to be obviously fermenting and there is a bitter smell, they know it is ready.

The Muria do not use landa for ritual purposes; it is made by just those Muria who do not erect memorial menhirs to their dead—which is the time when the Bison-horn Maria chiefly use it ceremonially. The Muria take it at marriages and funerals; they give it to their labourers at seed-time or harvest; it is generally regarded as a sort of supplementary drink to be used when the supply of mahua spirit or salphi juice is insufficient.

[1] Elwin, *Maria Murder and Suicide*, pp. 135ff.

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XII. The Sago-Palm

273 137 Another very popular drink is the juice of the sago-palm, and since the Muria have developed many legends round it I will give the subject a section of its own.[1]

The sago-palm (*Caryota urens*, Linn.), which is known as *gorga marra* in Gondi and as *salpi rukh* in Halbi, is widely distributed over the greater part of the State. It is an erect monoecious tree, with axillary spadices, which sometimes grows to the height of sixty or eighty feet. Its long bipinnate leaves with their fish-tail ends are sometimes twenty feet long. The aboriginals, whether Hill Maria, Bison-horn Maria or Muria,[2] regard the trees primarily as a source of liquor, though they use the inner tissues of the stem and the wood for other purposes. The popularity of the tree is shown in the riddle, [524] 'Above sits the parrot, below is the thrashing-floor', suggesting that under the beautiful sago-palm a great crowd of people gather, and in such songs as *'Waliya wāto gorga ale māmāle*—O uncle, the sago-palms are everywhere you go'. Unlike mahua spirit, however, salphi juice is not usually used in worship or on other ceremonial occasions.[3] It is rather a drink for one's private and friendly hours, though it may often supplement a failing supply of mahua at a marriage or funeral.

824 538 As always, legends and stories gather about anything that is intimately connected with the life of the people. There are several different accounts of the origin of the sago-palm, but all agree in connecting it with youth and gaiety. It came into being when maidens danced together or when boys pursued their loves. In the north of the State the most common legend traces its origin to an expedition of boys and girls from the house of Bhagavan, which came down to earth to dance and bathe.[4] One such party came to Chikhli village on the northernmost plateau of the State and after bathing, the girls left behind the cowrie ornaments of their hair. These ornaments are very popular among the motiari; sometimes a mass of cowries covers the whole of the back of their heads. When the girls found they had lost their ornaments they were angry and cursed the cowries saying, 'Now turn into sago-palms and we will always live with you and will never lose you again.' For this reason it is said that the cowrie is the tuft of feathers that fell from Lingo's turban. Yet again it is said that the tree was a feather stuck in the hair of a motiari which fell off as she was going to Penjori village to dance the Diwali dances, and turned into a tree when she got angry with it. But everywhere it is agreed that the tree springs up in all those places where the girls either from the house of Bhagavan or from some earthly ghotul used to go to dance. In the forests above the Raughat and all along the northern plateau there are a great many of these trees and these were the very parts where the girls went for their dancing in the dawn of the world.

There are, however, some other versions of the origin of the palm. In Mule village the Muria say that when the seven salphi maidens (Gorga Kanyang) were born they only had one placenta between them. This was cut off and

[1] For a fuller account see my article 'The Sago-Palm in Bastar State', *JRAS. Bom.*, Vol. XVIII (N.S. 1942), pp. 69-78.

[2] Grigson is not quite correct in saying that Hill and Bison-horn Maria 'almost alone in Bastar use salphi liquor'.—Grigson, op. cit., p. 224. The Muria of the north are among the most enthusiastic drinkers of salphi juice in the whole State.

[3] According to Thurston, the fermented juice is used ceremonially at marriages and festivals by the Poroja and Savara.—Thurston, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 216, 322.

[4] The seven heavenly damsels who came down to dance and bathe on earth is a common motif in Indian folk-tales. See Thurston, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 100.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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of which a folded leaf of the date palm is attached to ensure that the juice trickles down into the pot. A small gourd with a hole at either end is kept in the pot, which is finally protected with a bamboo cover to guard it from wind and birds.

When the climber has reached the pot, he removes the leaf and scrapes the end of the cut spadix with a knife that is kept among the branches. Sometimes he rubs it with a little marking-nut juice. Then he removes the sap from the pot and puts it in a gourd tied round his waist. Sometimes if the tree is very high, he lowers this gourd down to the ground with a cord. Then he replaces the leaf at the end of the spadix, puts the cover over the pot and descends.

There are various rules and customs about the use of the juice. It is not considered good to drink it when it is too sweet, as it has a laxative effect. For this reason a little of the old juice is always left in the pot to ferment it. To increase its power a little of the root of the danbaher tree is added. When the weather is cloudy it is considered that it will not be good. The juice of a newly tapped tree should not be given to a pregnant woman or she may abort. In fact, at the beginning, when a new tree is tapped only men drink. The Hill Maria do not give the juice at any time to a woman in her menstrual period.

There is a curious idea that the sago-palm itself is subject to a menstrual period.[1] Every month there is a space of two or three days during which the juice does not flow properly and it is not considered safe at this time to drink even what little there is. So, too, for the first week or so after a new tree is tapped the juice should be avoided, for it is then, they say, like semen. At Phunder, the Muria said that the end of the tree's menstrual period is indicated by the presence of a lotus leaf in the pot.

In some villages, the Muria believe that two Kanyang visit the palms. One is Jal Kanyang, and is a motiari; the other, Kaudo Kanyang, is regarded with characteristic inconsistency as a chelik. When Kaudo Kanyang comes to play in a tree, the juice is scanty but good; when Jal Kanyang comes, the juice flows like a river but it is less potent. Sometimes then a little sand and even fish are found in the pot.

This belief in the fish that get into the pot is widespread. Once in the days of Chaitu Gaita of Alor, a chelik climbed a sago-palm and found two *turu* fish and some sand at the bottom of the gourd. At Palli I was told that such fish were 'sometimes caught by the Salphi Maiden and taken up into the tree'. I have recorded the same idea among the Hill Maria.[2]

When a tree is tapped for the first time offerings are made to the Gorga Kanyang. In some villages a hollow bamboo full of water is brought from a stream and leant against the foot of the palm. It is believed that a Kanyang lives in this water and probably there is an idea that the tree will give as much juice as there is water in the bamboo. In order to improve the flow of juice the villagers sometimes promise the Gorga Kanyang a pig or a chicken.

At Adnar on the day they first tapped a new tree the village Gaita, followed by all the villagers, came to its foot. With red and black powder he made a row of three circles, inside each of which he drew a cross. Rice was piled on these crosses and two leaf-cups full of salphi juice were placed by them. One pile of rice was for the Gorga Kanyang, one for Kaudo Kanyang, and one for

[1] This idea is widespread: I have found it among Juang, Kond, Gadaba, Bondo and, in Bastar, among the Bison-horn Maria.

[2] Compare S. L. Hora, 'Rains of Fishes in India', *JRASB.*, Vol. XXIX (1933), pp. 93ff.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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Mother Earth. The Gaita offered eggs and chickens, first making the chickens eat the rice and then killing them. The juice in the leaf-cups was offered to the Earth Mother and the Kanyang and then everyone drank a little. After this the owner was free to tap the tree in the ordinary way.

Failure of the sago-palm may be due either to black magic and witchcraft or to the hostility of one of the Gorga Kanyang. The Kanyang, if she is not happy in a particular village, may twist the branches at the top of the tree and cause them to wither. It is generally believed that the tree gives juice for three years 'just as a girl can enjoy herself for three years protected by Lingo in the ghotul. Then she marries and the juice ceases to flow. The motiari of the palm tree is afraid of marrying too soon. If we touch the tree with a cloth yellowed by haldi it will stop giving juice till the new shoots come, for the shadow of haldi (that is, of marriage) is upon it.'

For gonorrhoea, a very rare disaster among these aboriginals, the sufferer stands below holding a leaf-cup into which a friend pours a little of the juice from the top of the tree. The patient offers a few drops to the Gorga Kanyang and then drinks it without allowing it to touch the ground.

The wood of the palm is not usually used for building in Bastar but the Hill Maria make their *turam* drums out of its hollow dried-up trunk. The Muria also make combs and drum-sticks out of the dry wood. Some of the Muria in the Abujhmar foothills make necklaces of the fibre. The leaves are often used as hair-ornaments or to decorate the village dormitories. Sometimes the flowers are pounded into flour, mixed with water and drunk as a sort of gruel. When it is evident that the tree will give no more juice, it is cut down and the pith is removed. This is pounded into a sort of flour and steamed in the usual way into cakes which are popular eaten with honey or sugar. This practice is common across the whole of the sago-palm country. I have found it among Hill Maria, Bondo, Gadaba, and Juang and it has been recorded for the Kadir and Khasi.[1]

The salphi juice is either brought back to the house and stored there until by fermentation it becomes much more intoxicating than in its fresh condition or it is drunk immediately at the foot of the tree. Little groups of people, generally men, go out to the trees, taking with them roasted crabs or frogs, little bits of chicken, various kinds of chutney, carefully wrapped in leaf-cups. The liquor is drunk from leaves, generally simply folded to make a sort of cup, and it is sometimes poured direct into the mouth. Many delightful hours are thus spent by the villagers out among the woods or on the hills.

When a tree is specially planted by seeds or cuttings it is very carefully tended. A fence of wood is built round it and it is watered regularly. Sometimes a tree is associated with the memory of a particular person. In Kanhargaon, a village in the Chota Dongar area, a Muria planted salphi and mango trees fifty years ago and they still preserve his memory. When the people go in the evening to drink the juice, they offer a few drops in the name of Tallur Muttai and Kadrengal to the sago-palm and a few drops in the name of the dead man who planted the trees to the mango, 'so that as we drink you can drink also'.

Generally speaking the tree belongs to the man in whose field or garden it is growing. Where the trees are out in the jungle, or standing in the common land of the village, disputes sometimes arise. The headman or the more influential priests generally claim these trees as their own, but there is also a

[1] Thurston, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 171.; P. R. T. Gurdon, *The Khasis* (London, 1914), p. 52. See also Grigson, op. cit., p. 152.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

custom that the man who goes to the trouble of tapping the tree, protecting it with thorns, and making a bamboo ladder, has a right over it, especially when it is growing far away in the forest. The trees are not taxed but the villagers are not allowed to sell the juice. Disputes simply arise over the right to take the liquor for personal use.

The salphi juice, however, is not generally so intoxicating as to cause quarrels in the same degree as landa rice-beer or mahua spirit. Bedford's *Technical Excise Manual* (par. 263) gives some account of the comparative alcoholic strengths of these drinks. 'The alcoholic strength of toddy varies according to the nature of the palm tapped, the season of the year, the time for which it has been drawn and other circumstances. The average results of a number of tests made with toddy from all parts of the Madras Presidency were:

		Percentage by Volume
Coconut ..	85·7° U.P.	8·1
Palmyra ..	90·8° U.P.	5·2
Date ..	91·4° U.P.	4·9
Sago ..	89·6° U.P.	5·9

Toddy exposed for sale in Bengal in 1909 was found generally to range in alcoholic strength from about 93° to 94° U.P. When reasonably fresh it has a food value somewhat comparable with that of well-made malt beer.' The average strength of landa rice-beer may be taken at about 85° U.P. (8·6% by volume). Mahua spirit is much stronger—*rasi* may be sold at strengths of 50° to 70° U.P. and *phuli* of 5° to 35° U.P. The average for *rasi* is 60° U.P. (22·8% by volume) and for *phuli* 25° U.P. (42·8%).

XIII

With all these varied economic and social activities how far do chelik and motiari meet one another during the day? Does tribal custom allow them to share the same tasks or are the functions of men and women sharply differentiated?

The girls, of course, have the major part of the house-work to see to. They cook, bring water, clean the buildings with cow-dung and whitewash, husk the grain, grind wheat or spices. They generally make the *masni* mats, tie grass into brooms, prepare leaf-plates and cups. In the house a woman must not climb on the roof and she must not take grain out of the dhusir grain-bin, although it may only be removed at her command. A motiari before the menarche may go into the room where the Pot of the Departed is kept, but not afterwards—for she is going to join another clan and has no part with these ancestors; her spirit will mingle with those of her husband's family.

The chelik, on the other hand, have comparatively little to do in the house. They may cook and bring water when the womenfolk are in their periods; they have the business of erecting the framework of the building which the girls will later plaster with mud, and they thatch the roof.

But their main work is outside. In male hands is all the business of the fields and forest. They make and use the ploughs; they cut wood for fuel or cultivation; they embank the fields; they tend the cattle, make and drive their carts; they go to hunt and fish; they watch the crops and thrash and winnow them.

Yet there remain many chances for sharing of labour between chelik and motiari. A boy does not always see his motiari in the dark. Both can repair

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria
Muria

184 existence among the Muria of the Ghotul or village dormitory, in which the boys and girls of the tribe grow up from childhood under a high degree of discipline and are trained in the tribal virtues. A system of what is practically pre-nuptial sexual communism teaches them from an early age the impropriety of jealousy. The habit of sharing everything all through childhood and youth in the dormitory weakens their individualistic attachment to personal property. The result is that several of the main causes of murder only lightly press upon them. The Bison-horn Maria probably had a similar dormitory club at one period and traces of it may still be found today. But it no longer exists as a social force, and the result is that the Maria—compared to their northern neighbours—grow up passionate and jealous, strongly attached to individual goods, undisciplined and revengeful. The Muria do not seem to consume any less
[273] alcohol than the Maria. Indeed the consumption of mahua spirit per head in the Muria area is higher than in the south. The Maria, however, drink more rice-beer, and there are many more cases of illicit distillation detected among them.

When my friend Mr A. N. Mitchell was Administrator of Bastar, he was troubled by this problem, and one day in conversation about it, one of us—I forget which—suggested that I might make some sort of survey of Maria homicides from my own independent angle. Mr Mitchell, with his unique zeal for everything affecting the life and welfare of aboriginals, gave me all possible facilities for my enquiry, and I was thus able not only to study official documents but also to visit the jail and discuss matters with many criminals.

101 The first task in my enquiry was to get at the records. I decided to confine myself to the exclusive study of the Bison-horn Maria, and here we were immediately faced by our first difficulty which was to decide who were to be included under this name. The name has come to be used in Bastar and in anthropology as a result of Mr W. V. Grigson's memorable book, *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*. But it is not, of course, a word that is used by the people of themselves. Many of them now do not call themselves Maria at all. At the 1941 Census, thousands of Maria returned themselves as Maria, because they thought it sounded more respectable. Many others in the south have for some time

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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front, the sister's son beating his drum above. From time to time they put their burden on the ground to rest, and are refreshed with rice-beer. 764

When the party reaches the pit that has been prepared, the drummers throw the castor-sticks which they have been using hitherto on to the pyre, and take new sticks, which may be made of any kind of wood. Before the stone is erected the Gaita addresses the dead, 'You are dead and you must forget your father, your mother, your brother and your family. This is your house. Live here and do not trouble us or our pigs and cattle. We are giving you rice and pulse and everything that you had at home, so that you may be satisfied'.

In the hole which has been dug by the sister's son, the relatives put something or other, rice, small coins, rings or ornaments, whatever they can afford. The bearers untie the stone from its poles and all push and lift it into position. Earth and stones are rammed round the bottom and a small cromlech is placed in front. On this stone offerings are made by the sister's son with his back to the menhir. The women of the household come and put cooked rice and haldi in leaf-cups on the cromlech, and pour upon it grain, roots, or anything that the dead man used to like when he was alive.

Then the whole party returns to the house and one or more cows are sacrificed. These were probably selected by the dead man during his life-time. They remove the liver and cut it in pieces. Rice is prepared in the house of the dead and divided into four portions and put in leaf-cups. These cups, with the tail of the sacrificed cow and a pot of rice-beer, are carried out in a specially-made basket to the menhir. One portion is put on the ground for Mother Earth and the rest for the dead man on the cromlech. The tail is hung over the menhir and rice-beer poured upon it. At the same time a little rice-beer must be offered to the old menhirs. If this is omitted the ancient dead will be angry and will quarrel with the new spirit that has gone to join them. [769]

Rice-beer must be given both to the menhir and to the mourners. It must be made fresh in the room where death occurred and served with a gourd with a long handle that 764 273

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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Bison Horn Maria

764 has been specially hollowed out for this purpose. Usually
273 there is no stock of rice-beer at hand and it cannot be made so quickly. The Maria then mix a little mandia flour with water and give this instead.

If for any reason in the course of the ceremony some rite or custom is omitted the spirit of the dead man may attack one or other of the mourners in order to show his displeasure. For example, at Gadapal, Burka Peda told me that they once forgot to give landa to the old menhirs and the insulted Dead attacked his father's sister and she fell down in a fit. They quickly gave both landa and mahua liquor to all the menhirs and she recovered. Again in Mahara-Karka one Kuhrami Eriya was hurled into the fire by the angry ghost and his leg was burnt. If this happens it is a good plan for the victim to run and catch
[789] hold of the bamboo poles with which the stone was carried. The Gaita pours water upon him and the angry ghost leaves him alone.

IX

322 When a very well-known or wealthy man dies his family
766 sometimes erects a carved wooden pillar to his memory.
554 There are very few of these pillars, though the custom of making them is far from moribund, but the expense is great and only the most important people are considered worthy of them.

322 These pillars are called by Grigson urasgatta, a word that
766 is obviously formed on the same plan as uraskal, from *urasna* meaning 'to bury' and *gatta*—'a pillar'. I have not myself found any Maria using the word or even recognizing it when it has been put to them. It may be that its use has died out. The Maria to whom I have spoken call these pillars either *munde* (Gondi) or *kambha* (Halbi or Hindi).

The pillars are usually erected near a highway—not necessarily a motorable one. It should simply be near any road or path that is constantly used by the people. The pillars are usually made of saja or sarai wood and are erected with ceremonies very similar to those for a stone.

There are not many of these pillars, but they are worth looking at. There is a very fine one near Dilmilli

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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Apparatus for distilling mahua spirit

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Detail of memorial pillar of Kopa Dhurua at Massenar, showing people serving rice-beer

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Woman making rice-beer

[FACING P. 96]

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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Maria climbing toddy tree to extract the juice

[Facing p. 97]

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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CHAPTER TEN

THE CAUSES OF CRIME: ALCOHOL

1

THE special and characteristic drink of the Bison-horn Maria 273
is rice-beer. Mahua spirit and the surem that is made from mahua[1] flowers, and the fermented sap of the toddy,[2] sago[3] and date[4] palms is also drunk. But landa rice-beer is not only obligatory on most festival occasions; it is also the favourite drink of boon companions. The Maria regards it both as an intoxicant and as a food—which indeed it is. It accompanies him from birth to death. It is drunk first at the ceremonies when he is named, again at his betrothal, again in large quantities at his marriage, and it is finally poured over his memorial stone after he is dead. At every great festival and at every point of the agricultural year, this nourishing and potent drink is made and enjoyed.

Mahua spirit, which is the ceremonial drink of the northern Gond, is also offered by the Bison-horn Maria at the time of sacrifice, and in small quantities on most ceremonial and domestic occasions. The juice of the toddy and sago palms is used almost entirely for happiness—as a stimulant and for recreation—though gourds full of the refreshing juice are often supplied at weddings and funerals to supplement the supply of rice-beer. A poor man who cannot provide sufficient mahua spirit or landa for his son's betrothal or marriage, may provide toddy instead. When Muka went to ask for the hand of the beautiful Kume in marriage, he took with him a gourdful of this juice. Surem, which is made by boiling the mahua flowers, is sometimes taken as a substitute for the properly distilled spirit.

All these drinks are gifts of the gods. Liquor comes 273 ●
from heaven, and who could resist so gracious a blessing? 773
Mahua was discovered much as in Muria and Baiga tradition. An ancient hero went out to find some means of entertaining his guests. He came to a mahua tree with a hole full of water beneath it, into which many of the flowers had fallen.

[1] *Bassia latifolia*, Roxb.
[2] *Borassus flabellifer*, Linn.
[3] *Caryota urens*, Linn.
[4] *Phoenix sylvestris*, Roxb.

[p. 131]

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273 All round the little pond were sitting rame birds singing,
773 wagging their heads to and fro and flapping their wings in great excitement. The hero tasted the water and soon he too was singing, dancing and flapping his arms in company with the birds.

The recipe for rice-beer was given to the Maria by the Supreme Being for no other purpose apparently but to cheer them up.

273 The origin of sago and toddy juice is more elaborately
773 described.

539 Long ago there was a Maria called Iro Kawachi who had two beautiful daughters, Ilo and Palo. He made a seat of mahua wood and covered it with the skins of lice. He proclaimed that anyone who could first lift it up and put it where he could bathe upon it, and who could say what kind of wood it was made of, and what skin covered it, would get his daughters. All the boys of the neighbourhood came to try but none could tell what the seat was and none could lift it up. At last came a lame boy called Mad Moda from the Irma Raj with an open sore upon his leg. He too was unable to guess what the seat was made of until a fly came and said, 'Let me sit on your sore and eat it and then I will tell you what the wood is'. The boy let the fly settle upon him and after it had taken its fill it told him that the seat was of mahua wood and covered with the skins of lice. Then the boy was able to lift up the seat and put it where Iro Kawachi could bathe.

Now Mad Moda was lame and ugly and covered with hideous sores. When the two girls Ilo and Palo saw him, they ran away in terror but the boy went stumbling along after them and dropped his dancing-stick. He went on and at last caught the girls by the strings with which they tied their hair into a bun. He pulled the cloth off their shoulders and tore out some of their hair. Then he threw them down in the bed of the Indaltom River and enjoyed them. Afterwards the river divided and flowed onwards in two streams.

The boy's bell-stick turned into a toddy tree; the strings from the girls' hair became sago palms; the hair itself grew up as a date palm; the cloth became the broad-leaved plantain tree. Because on that day the girls' cloth fell from their shoulders, they now do not cover their breasts.

This is the story as it was told in Garmiri village. It is known in its main outlines in many other places, though

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with small variations. In Dualkarka it was Ira Dhurwa 273
who made the seat and its covering was of cloth. In Muskel 773
it was Gaja Bhimul who made it and the end of the story 539
is that Ilo and Palo jumped into the river at Dantewara and were drowned.

A few stories resemble the tales of the northern Muria. The Pen Kaina come down to bathe in the Godaveri river; they come singing to eat jamun fruit; or they simply come to dance. They sing, 'Whoever can tell what our names are, we will go with him'. When the village boys find they cannot tell their names they get angry and try to catch them. As the girls run away their bell-sticks fall and become toddy trees. The boys throw their sticks at them and these become sago palms. As the girls run away the kardan-belts round their waists break and turn into the date palm. The knots on these belts are its fruit. The god cuts off the testicles of the boys and sticks them on to the end of the dancing-sticks and these become toddy fruit. That is why, the Maria say, their women beat the sticks so vigorously as they dance. This version of the story is from Bara Harmamunda. In Palnar the situation is reversed. When the boys begin to flirt with the girls, the girls beat them with their bell-sticks and it is the boys who run away. Here they add that the toddy trees said, 'We won't stay here', and went down below the hills. But the sago palms remained on the Dantewara plateau.

Another completely different type of story is told in the neighbourhood of Bailadila. Long ago a group of Maria were hunting on the Bailadila Hills. They grew very thirsty and went searching for water. A rat had nibbled at the peduncle of a sago palm and a jungle cock had scratched a hole in the ground at its foot. The juice dropped into this hole and filled it. When the hunters came to the place they found a hole full of refreshing juice and drank it and thus learnt to tap the tree.

The comparative strength of these drinks is given in 273
Bedford's *Technical Excise Manual*. The alcoholic strength of toddy varies according to the nature of the palm tapped, the season of the year, the time for which it has been drawn and other circumstances. The average results of a number

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273 of tests made with toddy from all parts of the Madras Presidency were :

			Percentage by volume
Cocoanut	85·7°	U.P.[A]	8·1
Palmyra	90·8°	U.P.	5·2
Date	91·4°	U.P.	4·9
Sago	89·6°	U.P.	5·9

Toddy exposed for sale in Bengal in 1909 was found generally to range in alcoholic strength from about 93° to 94° U.P. When reasonably fresh it is said to have a food value somewhat comparable with that of well-made malt beer.

The strength of country beers (which include landa) made generally from rice or millet varies from about 75° U.P. to 93° U.P. (14.3 to 4.0 per cent by volume) and the average may be taken at about 85° U.P. (8.6 per cent by volume). *Rasi* liquor made of mahua is permitted to be sold between the strengths of 50° to 70° U.P. and *phuli* liquor between 15° to 35° U.P., and although the strength of liquor offered for sale at shops in the south of Bastar is stronger than that in the north, the average strength of *rasi* liquor may be taken as 60° U.P. (22.8 per cent by volume) and that of *phuli* as 25° U.P. (42.8 per cent by volume).

The Maria themselves say that it is the mixture of drinks that is most dangerous. I have everywhere heard it said that they do not consider the rice-beer to be the most intoxicating. Mahua spirit is that. Rice-beer is a food which fills the stomach.[1] But when a man drinks first rice-beer, then a little mahua spirit and finishes off with a gourd or two of sago or toddy juice, he will get drunk on a grand scale. It is also said that it is when the juice of male and female toddy palms is mixed together that it becomes very intoxicating. It apparently makes no difference to the potency of rice-beer whether it is made with rice or with the smaller millets. Indeed it is generally a mixture of several grains.

Excise Sub-Inspectors whom I have consulted support the Maria in their opinion that mahua spirit is more intoxicating

[1] Dalton was impressed by the way Uraon boys and girls could go to work after a night's dancing "as cheerfully and vigorously as if their night had been passed in sound sleep. This says much for the wholesomeness of the beverage (rice-beer) that supplies them with the staying power", *Descriptive Ethnology*, p. 249.

[A] [i.e., underproof.-Analyst]

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than rice-beer or the fermented palm juices. They have added that the mahua liquor is much more rapid in its effect; rice-beer must be taken in large quantities and acts slowly; men do not usually become violent unless they take some liquor as well. A seer of rice-beer is considered equivalent to a bottle of liquor at 70° U.P. Intoxication from rice-beer lasts longer and has a much less deleterious effect. Since it has a high food value, the beer-drinker does not weaken like the mahua-addict. The Sub-Inspectors were unanimously of opinion that Maria did not drink to excess and did not consider that intoxication was a major cause of homicide.

The making of rice-beer is to some extent a ceremonial act. It should be done by a woman in the relation of daughter-in-law to the head of the household or the priest of the village, and she should work on 'a hungry belly'. It is made of a mixture of rice or kosra,[1] and mandia.[2] The mandia is pounded, soaked in water and put in a basket covered with a leaf which is kept in place with a stone. After two or three days in the basket the grain begins to sprout. It is then washed and dried and ground. In the meantime the kosra or rice, or kosra and rice mixed together, are husked and cleaned, and then husked or ground in an ordinary mill. The flour is mixed with hot water into a paste. A very large earthenware pot of water is kept boiling, and into the mouth of this pot is placed a bamboo funnel called the *jib*, and the paste is put into this and steamed. Now the pot of water is removed from the fire, and the mandia flour is put into another pot. The steamed rice or kosra paste is put above this and then above it again more mandia flour. The pot is filled to the top with cold water, the lid is closed with leaves, and it is put aside to ferment. After three or four days it begins to bubble and when, as Grigson says, 'there is a smell like a fowl-house that badly needs cleaning, they know that it is ready'.

There are many rules and superstitions about the use of sago and toddy juice. Women must not take it when a tree is first tapped. It should not be drunk when it is too sweet, and so on. Careful precautions are taken to guard the trees against theft. Sometimes a large bamboo mat is tied round

[1] *Panicum miliaceum.* [2] *Eleusine coracana.*

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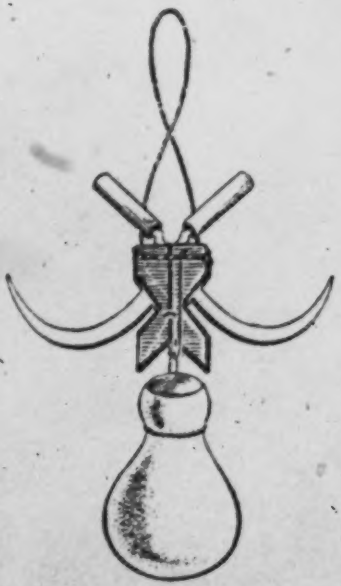
273 the trunk; sometimes bundles of thorns are placed to deter the thief. The owners sometimes live in little leaf-huts built below the trees in order to guard them. The tree is climbed 417 by a long bamboo pole which hooks on to a branch at the 481 summit. The side-shoots of the pole are not removed and these serve as the steps of the ladder. When not in use it is removed and kept in a house or in some hiding-place in the jungle. Sometimes a large loop is made at the end of the ladder and it fixes on to a bamboo hook which is tied to the tree. Once in Gogonda I saw a Maria getting up a very tall sago palm with great ingenuity. At the foot there was a pole eight feet high fixed in the ground. The climber had to get to the top of this and then, supporting himself upon it with his legs, had to catch the hook twenty feet above him with a long double bamboo pole with a loop at its end. This was no mean feat, and when it was done he had to tie the end of the swinging stick to the pole on which he had been standing and climb up to where he was able to hoist himself to the top of the tree by the branches.

In the Konta Tahsil the method of climbing is the same as that recorded for [273] the Kadir, which again compares with that of the Dyak of Borneo. Long lengths of bamboo are tied to the trunk. The climber ties round his waist an ingenious gadget called *kach pirik*, holding two knives and a gourd, and he then climbs straight up the tree. In other villages the *mohukum* is used. This is a beautifully made arrangement of ropes by which the climber's body is attached to the trunk, and can be



Kach-pirik apparatus for extracting toddy-juice

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slipped up it. Between his feet is tied another rope which holds them against the tree. He is thus able to get up the tree like a humping caterpillar. A Maria told me that in the evening the people go up the trees 'like a company of monkeys'. When villagers go to drink sago or toddy, they often take with them little leaf-bundles containing dry fish, roasted crabs, red ants or mahua paste.

It is impossible to say how much alcohol is drunk by the Maria. According to the Excise figures in the Dantewara Tahsil and Sukma Zamindari where the population is overwhelmingly Maria, the consumption per 100 in proof gallons is 46.48 and 50.51 respectively. In the Muria Tahsil to the north it is 32.43 in Kondagaon and 58.90 in Narayanpur. Narayanpur, it must be remembered, has a large population of Hill Maria who do not drink rice-beer which may explain why there is a higher consumption of mahua spirit. In the Bison-horn Maria area, there are —according to the Settlement records—about 75,000 toddy trees. The number of sago palms is not known, but is—I believe—considerably smaller.

Mohukum ropes for climbing toddy trees

Illicit distillation was a feature of two at least of the murders. In the last five years 143 cases were detected in the Dantewara Tahsil, 91 in Bijapur, 65 in Jagdalpur as against only 11 in Kondagaon and 18 in Narayanpur. This certainly suggests that the Bison-horn Maria are much more given to illicit distillation than their brethren of the north. But, of course, these figures may only reflect greater energy

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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674 273 on the part of the Excise staff in certain areas, or greater willingness of informers to come forward with their tale of what is going on.

733 Although drunkenness usually is a marked feature of festivals, marriages and funerals, habitual drunkenness is never common among the aboriginals. For one thing they are too poor for it; for another it is too much trouble. A certain proportion of the people are teetotal, and others never touch mahua spirit and do not drink at any times except on privileged and ceremonial occasions.

II

674 273 How far does this drinking of alcohol explain the heavy incidence of homicide among the Bison-horn Maria? It is commonly said that drinking, and especially the drinking of landa rice-beer, is the main cause. It is true that a plea of drunkenness is frequently put forward by accused persons in the Court. But there is reason to suppose that frequently this is suggested to them by their counsel. In many cases the excuse of intoxication was not made by the accused in his confession to the police, or before the lower Court. It was introduced as an afterthought before the Sessions Judge. In the 100 cases the Court only accepted as true a plea of drunkenness in 19 instances. Of these 19, 13 cases of intoxication were due to landa beer, 4 to mahua spirit and 2 to palm juice. Landa intoxication usually occurred during festivals, but there is no record of any murder at a marriage or funeral, the other occasions when this drink is consumed in large quantities.

TABLE EIGHTEEN

Showing the occasions of homicide committed through intoxication

At festivals	12
At marriages	None
At funerals	None
After visiting a liquor shop	4

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TABLE NINETEEN

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273

Illustrating the influence of liquor on homicide in 100 cases

Due to drinking landa beer	...	...	13
" " mahua spirit	...	...	4
" " sago juice	...	...	1
" " toddy juice	...	...	1
Due to other causes	...	...	81

The question of alcoholism as a cause of crime has been discussed in an important article by Dr Norwood East, a former Commissioner of Prisons in England. He describes how he examined a series of 100 unselected cases of men and youths, who had been tried for murder in post-war years and had been examined by him. Alcohol was a predominant or contributing cause of homicide in 19 cases. Dr East concludes from this and from a study of other investigations that there appears to be no reason at the present time to consider alcohol as 'more than an occasional factor in the causation of crime in England'.

'Every practical criminologist' he says, 'will attach some importance to the association of alcoholism and crime. It is, however, very easy to over-emphasize the connection'.[1]

Another investigation into the influence of alcohol on crime was made recently by Dr J. C. M. Matheson, Governor of Holloway Prison for Women. In an analysis of all the women received into the prison charged with homicide from 1935 to 1939, he found that in only 3 out of 55 cases did alcohol appear as a direct factor, and in one of them the accused was acquitted. The youngest of these women was 39 years old. In 3 there was a family history of alcoholism, but no history of alcoholic habit in the person herself.[2]

Kinberg gives an even more impressive judgement. 'Many see in the use of alcoholic liquors perhaps the worst social cancer, if not the root of all social evils, and are therefore inclined to consider drink one of the main causes of criminality too. It is most unlikely that such a schematic

[1] W. Norwood East, 'The Problem of Alcohol in Relation to Crime', *The British Journal of Inebriety*, Vol. XXXVII (1939), pp. 55 ff.
[2] J. C. M. Matheson, 'Alcohol and Female Homicides', *The British Journal of Inebriety*, Vol. XXXVII (1939), pp. 87 ff.